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ABSTRACT

This series of 10 short publications addresses topics relevant to early childhood development. Topics discussed include: (1) the ethnic traditions and unique characteristics of every child; (2) suggestions to working parents for coping with their family obligations; (3) suggestions for activities parents can engage in with their young children; (4) suggestions for creative activities for young children; (5) child development during the first year of life; (6) discipline of young children, including hints for parents and ways of dealing with a crisis; (7) the choice of a child care facility; (8) the relationship between parents and teachers; (9) the building of a child's self-esteem, knowledge, and concentration through play and conversation; and (10) the selection of toys for young children. Most of these short publications contain a list of references for further reading on the topic discussed. (BC)

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Early Childhood Development Series

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EVERY CHILD IS A UNIQUE AND SPECIAL PERSON

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

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"You are very special." We say that to children to help them understand they are indeed unique and VERY SPECIAL. What else can we do to help children understand, enjoy, and appreciate their unique and special qualities, as well as the unique and special qualities of others?

Visiting a newborn nursery provides a snapshot view of the diversity within our country. Tiny newborns demonstrate their uniqueness to the world. While babies all look different in their individual features, most interesting is the remarkable differences in their behavior – when and how they cry, rest, eat, fuss, sleep, and respond to stimuli.

From birth onward, we have the opportunity to value diversity in young children and to help them feel pride in who they are and the special unique qualities they bring to the world. In addition, we can help children appreciate the different unique and special qualities of others. To assist children in their growth of valuing diversity try some fun ideas:

Family ethnic traditions

Start by sharing family ethnic traditions. Holidays and religious or ethnic festivities teach children about their past and provide warm, supportive, family memories for children.

1. Record oral histories. Talk with grandparents, aunts and uncles about their experiences and the recollections their parents told them. Use a tape recorder. Share the similarities and differences of a child's life years ago and a child's life today.

2. Keep a scrapbook of your family's country of origin. Include photographs of family members still living there, newspaper clippings of the area today, stamps, and drawings.

3. Visit the library to learn more about the country your family came from. Share stories and pictures. Listen to older members of your family tell fables and legends that were told to them. Write them down to share with children.

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4. Learn some of the language of your family's country. Encourage children to learn special words and phrases.

5. Enjoy the music of your homeland and share these tunes with your children. Teach your children special songs to sing at holiday and other special times. Learn the dances and games.

6. Use traditional family recipes and other recipes from your country. Talk about where the foods came from and how they were served. Attend traditional festivities with others who share your historic roots. If possible go berry picking together and participate in other traditional food-gathering practices.

7. Explore maps and a globe together with other family members. Talk about how your family came to this country, and the neighboring countries that they or others have visited.

Unique qualities of each individual

While groups of people within a community may look similar in some of the ways they eat, work, play, live, and dress, vast differences exist in how people feel, believe, and act. Help children value the special unique qualities of each individual – even within a common cultural heritage, group of friends, or family.

1. Talk about learning styles. Some people learn best by listening, some by seeing, and others by experiencing. Talk about family members and the special ways they learn best.

2. Talk about favorites. People have favorite foods, activities and talents that make them special. Talk about family members and their special qualities.

3. Share books with children about different people: people from other lands, people who work in other occupations, and people who have other special interests and abilities.

4. Talk with young children about differences that come with growth. Discuss how different people of varying ages have distinct abilities and interests.

5. Share "first" stories with children. Talk about their first word, their first party, their first steps, their first solid food, something they did that made the family laugh, and their first pet experiences.

6. Share your special abilities with your family, friends, and others. Talk about the different abilities that exist within a family. Encourage hobbies that explore interests, favorite kinds of play, and special talents.

7. Explore the culture of your community with young children. Visit a museum, store, places of work, and community center. Look at things that people used long ago. Talk about relevant aspects of the village history and life today (such as, how did the community get water before the current water supply)? Attend the cultural festivities of the community with other family members.

Weaving a little respect of diversity into the fabric of ordinary life can be very rewarding. Not only will children grow in their understanding and appreciation for who they are, but also in their understanding and appreciation for one another. "Look, Mom, we both drew a picture – but his is red and mine's blue!" takes on new and richer meaning.

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"A B C" SURVIVAL PLAN FOR WORKING PARENTS

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

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Answer your mail, pay bills and balance your checkbook at least once each month. The first Saturday of every month is a great day. Toss receipts and records in pre-labeled files for **Tax Time**.

Be good to yourself. Spend a little time doing something special – just for you – every day. Do your nails, take a bubble bath, listen to beautiful music or take a walk. Consider **trading** time, so your spouse can watch the children for these moments.

Cook dinner every Sunday plus an additional two or three evening meals to freeze and use later. Two extra meals of spaghetti sauce, a large roast that can be ground for hash, a huge pot of beans, or two additional small meatloaves can be defrosted and baked later.

Depend on other family members to do selected household tasks. Young children can pick up their own toys, pass out napkins, help with meal preparation and cleanup, and put their clothes away – with a little help from adults. Teach responsibility. Comment on their helpfulness!

Enjoy a special event once a week with your spouse. Go to a movie, watch a special TV show, have dinner out, play a great game of Monopoly, have lunch together, enjoy a late-night cup of tea by the fire, or have friends in. Sharing time with your special person keeps love growing!

Finish something every day or two. Bake a cake or pie and notice the results. Do the ironing. Read two pages. Completing any task gives a person a feeling of accomplishment, or "closure," and satisfaction!

Give each family member a hug and tell them how much you love them every day. There are two things family members don't store – Vitamin C and **LOVE** — they need a little bit of each daily!

Hang up clothes immediately when you take them off, take them out of the dryer, or off the line. Teach other family members to do the same. A wrinkle saved is a minute earned!

Invest in a good "wash-and-wear" haircut that only needs an occasional trim to keep you feeling wonderful. Make sure you LOVE it! Change to a different "wash-and-wear" style for a new lift.

Jaw with a special friend over coffee or lunch at least once every week. Laugh about old times and share what's happening in your daily life. If you don't live nearby, "let your fingers do the walking" and use the phone!

Keep a bin of cleaner, paper towels, and a sponge near every household sink (but away from little children) for quick mid-week wipe-ups. A quick wipe-up, while your bath water is running, would fool anyone!

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Laugh a little bit every day. Read jokes, enjoy the humorous side of yourself and others. Laughter belongs in the home, in the school and on the street – it's a great release from daily stress! Do whatever you can to reform the world!

Make your bed as you climb out of it, and teach other family members how to do the same. It's a bit tricky – but it gets the job DONE!

Negotiate a shared plan of responsibilities with your spouse. Post your joint plan on the refrigerator where it can be seen, expect it to work, **notice** what parts of it work well, and show your appreciation **(loudly)** for the parts that do!

Observe regular bedtime hours so you get eight hours of sleep every night. Make sure other family members get enough sleep as well. Become a clock watcher!

Polish the windows, vacuum the corners, and clean the cupboards twice each year – before Thanksgiving, and before Memorial Day. Between those times enjoy what is clean and ignore the rest!

Quit procrastinating. Start today to do that job you've been wanting to do. A few minutes each day will soon have that dreaded job well on its way to being done!

Read a good book – just for fun – every month. Books keep you growing, learning and help keep your mind active. Read about the struggles of famous people and you'll find new contentment in your life!

Shop for groceries and other necessities once a week instead of stopping at the market every day. Establish necessary storage containers to survive until your next trip. Become a list maker!

Take some quiet time to spend with **each** family member every day. Share a book together, take a walk, watch your child play, help with homework, or just listen to your child or spouse. Attention is love!

Utilize spare minutes to browse through a magazine or newspaper. Keep periodicals in "waiting" places like vehicles, bathrooms, and kitchens – and one in your pack.

Vacuum, mop the floors, scrub the bathroom and dust the house every Saturday. Do it to music! Establish habits that keep it tidy during the week. The "lived-in" look is IN!

Worry less! Limit your worrying to a specific amount of time. Call it your daily "worry- time," decide a plan of action to do what you can, and leave the rest. Be thankful.

'Xercise while you watch your favorite TV program 3 times a week. Encourage other family members to join in the fun and talk about how great it makes you feel!

Yell if you need to. Try yelling in your closet, an empty field, or sing very loudly in the shower – for a great stress release!

Zoom through the chores that must be done so you'll have time to observe the flowers, the love of little children and the kindnesses of the world – EVERY DAY!

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ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

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For Children 3 to 8 years

Plan to spend some time with young children doing activities together! Not only will the children have a great time, but adults can discover a great source of pleasure, benefit from the change of pace, and get to know their young people in new special ways. Since young children learn through direct experience, adults give a very special gift to children when they share time working or playing together.

HOW MUCH TIME TOGETHER AND WHEN?

Schedule at least half-an-hour of time to work or play with your children uninterrupted. For many, after dinner when the other household tasks are completed may be best. Others may prefer time together in the morning, often leading to exploring and working on the projects by the children throughout the day. Hint: plan to spend a few extra minutes gathering and preparing materials you will use AHEAD OF TIME. Waiting patiently for a long time can be discouraging for children, dampening the potential fun together.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE BEST?

Since children grow best when allowed to develop at their own pace, our task is to provide activity experiences through which children can learn at their own speed. Sharing in the activity with children heightens enjoyment and greatly increases the meaningfulness of the work or play. Children grow in MANY ways through play — sharing activities together will enable you to watch growth occur. Examples:

- Go sledding together to observe large muscles at work
- Help children sort buttons to watch small muscles become more skilled
- Observe social development as children work or play together
- Witness language development as you talk together about what is happening
- Be a part of your child's growth in understanding concepts as the child thinks through problems and evaluates choices in his play, or interrupts the story to ask a question or clarify an event.

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Open and Closed Activities. Activities which are "open ended" are those allowing children many positive ways to "finish" a task, providing them with opportunities to be individually creative and LEARN while they work or play. Working with paint, clay, blocks, and sand are all "open ended" because of the endless possibilities for finishing the job – any effort by the child can be enjoyed.

Children learn through the PROCESS, and may or may not care about the finished product. Remember, don't be disappointed if it doesn't look like you thought it would. In time, the child's unique style will emerge and you will see original products.

Other activities are more structured and "closed," such as reading books to children, sharing in the dinner preparation, or singing songs together. Closed activities enhance language development and understanding of our world through conversation, problem solving ("how should we do this???"), and cooperatively working together. Plan both kinds of activities with your children and notice which kinds of activities they enjoy most. Above all, keep expectations simple.

NOW THAT I'VE PLANNED SOMETHING FUN TO DO , HOW DO I PROCEED?

For the greatest learning and most fun, plan to provide children LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES to make decisions and choices during your special time together. Let the child decide whether he would like to scrub the potatoes (in a large plastic bowl with scrub brush and some water) or peel the carrots (with peeler on a cookie sheet to catch the peelings) for dinner. Let the child choose the book to read; young children enjoy and learn from having favorite stories re-read MANY times over.

Children can help decide the color of play dough, where is the best place to work or play to make the least mess, and where to store their finished products. Provide these discussion opportunities for them and encourage contributions.

Be SAFETY conscious. A three-year old child needs help learning how to safely use a vegetable peeler and must be carefully supervised. Scissors

can be used by young children, but should have rounded points and only be used while supervised. For all activities, some parts of the work or play may be hazardous, depending on the child.

Avoid Discipline Problems. Because young children are constantly exploring and learning, you will find it helpful to use positive suggestions to rechannel the activity safely. These statements help avoid power confrontations and have positive results. For example, "Mark, we need to keep the sand low in the sandbox so it doesn't accidentally get into someone's eyes. You may use this cup for measuring now since John is finished with it." Such statements explain WHY the activity could be hazardous and help start the child into more appropriate activity. They avoid confrontations and help the child get attention from positive work experiences rather than inappropriate behavior. Even though establishing A FEW GOOD SAFETY RULES will increase everyone's enjoyment of the activity, ALWAYS BE NEARBY!

Minimize the Mess. Assist children in doing those jobs they can do, at the same time eliminating unnecessary cleanup tasks for everyone. Laying out newspapers on the floor before beginning a messy project at the kitchen table will make for easy, quick cleanup. Setting out a dampened sponge will permit children to wipe up their own spills, helping them to develop responsibility for their own actions. Using aprons – or Dad's old shirt – keeps clothes clean. Before you start, talk about cleanup! And, keep in mind cleanup can be a fun, learning activity in itself.

Assist as Needed. Some children don't know how to start an activity and may ask you to do it for them, such as "You paint a picture for me, Dad." It is helpful to show the child techniques to use – how to make a line, a circle, a thin stroke or a fat stroke – and then explore what happens when you combine these strokes. With clay, show the child how to make a ball and a rope and see what happens when you start to put them together. Doing things FOR the child may discourage attempts because often children feel they cannot produce the quality of finished product you can. If a child wants to make a particular thing, ask the child what the thing looks like and encourage his attempts. Or, help him enjoy the PROCESS of cutting and pasting, for example, and appreciate all results. Rather than asking him WHAT he is making, enjoy the efforts and have fun exploring together.

KEEP CONVERSATIONS POSITIVE!

Some activities will naturally work great for you and the children. Other activities may not turn out to be the fun either of you anticipated. Listening to the children and watching carefully will provide you with clues as to how to modify or change the activity to better suit a child's interest and abilities. For example, you may need to move the story reading out of the busy living room where the rest of the family is watching TV – to provide the special quiet environment that is essential. Or, you may need to add some cookie cutters to help get your child involved with the play dough. Remember, however, the time to cheerfully put the activity away is when the child loses interest. He will ask for it again when he is ready.

Talking WITH children about their experiences will enhance their learnings. Listen to your children and respond in ways that assist the children to learn. Suggest ways to discover answers to questions, and explore the process together. Sometimes it is fun to say, "I wonder what would happen if..." and proceed together. Use descriptive language to talk about the children's efforts and products, as "Wow, that is a very red painting." "You worked a long time on that building, Mark." "You have made round cookies and long skinny cookies, haven't you?" Descriptive comments like these create pride in work accomplishment and enhance language development of children.

HOW DO I STOP THE ACTIVITY?

Since all fun times must come to an end, be clear with the child at the start what your time limits are, if any. For example, "Jamie, we can play together for 30 minutes, and then it will be my time to feed the baby," clarifies to the young person that there are limits, and that you or he have other tasks to perform. Showing the child on the clock what time you need to stop may also be helpful. Near the end of your time together, give a five minute warning, as "Mary, we need to finish up now as you and I need to start dinner for Daddy. We have about five more minutes. Would you like to save this project and work on it some more tomorrow?" Displaying the activity of the child helps build pride in work accomplishments.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE A CHILD TO DO THESE ACTIVITIES MORE OFTEN?

Once a child knows HOW to complete a process, you may want to establish a special children's drawer, box, or shelf to keep materials the child may use when desired. Equip it with safe, age-appropriate materials he can independently work with, such as pencils, crayons, chalk, paste, paper, and rubber bands. Include empty clean juice cans, plastic containers, clean foil scraps, egg cartons, leftover string, buttons, etc. – all the "treasures" one is tempted to toss which provide raw materials for new "creations." Provide the child with a quiet mess-proof corner nearby and an apron or Dad's old shirt for messy activities. Your child will enjoy creating his own "projects" during the times it may not be possible to work together; and before long he will be teaching you "how to do it!"

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PAINT, PASTE, PLAY DOUGH, PUPPETS AND PAPER MACHE

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

500G-00082

CREATIVE ACTIVITY IDEAS
FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Flour and Salt Finger Paint, Cooked
2 cups flour
3 cups cold water
2 teaspoons salt
2 cups hot water
Add salt to flour, pour in cold water gradually and beat mixture with egg beater until smooth. Add hot water, mix together and bring to a boil. Boil until it becomes glossy. Beat until smooth, then mix in coloring. Add additional water to thin to desired consistency (up to 1 cup).

Flour and Salt Finger Paint, Uncooked
1 cup flour
1 cup water
1½ teaspoons salt
Coloring
Combine flour and salt, add water. Add desired coloring, mix together.
This finger paint has a grainy quality unlike the other finger paints, providing a different sensory experience.

Cornstarch Finger Paint
½ cup boiling water
6 tablespoons cold water
2 tablespoons cornstarch
Dissolve starch in cold water in a cup. Add this mixture to boiling water, stirring constantly. Heat until it becomes glossy. Add color. Note: cooling causes paint to thicken slightly. 1 to 2 tablespoons more water can be added if it is too thick.

Easy Finger Painting
clear liquid detergent (or liquid starch)
dry tempera paint
Squirt liquid detergent on paper. Stir in about 1 teaspoon of dry paint **using caution not to breathe in the paint dust.** Paint on paper. For a change, paint directly on a durable, scrubable surface, such as an old plastic tablecloth. After the design has been made, lay the paper on the finger paint and rub. Lift off carefully.

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Variety Painting
For a change, try using household implements to paint or print with. Try a comb, an old toothbrush, string, an old toy wheel, vegetables cut in half with a shape carved out, sponges, a wadded bit of paper towel, alphabet letters, and other safe items from the kitchen drawer. Try different motions, as pulling the object across the paint, or quick dabs onto the paper. Try spatter painting and block painting. Finished paper can be used to cover wastebasket, to wrap packages, or for greeting cards.

Flour Paste
Mix together 1/4 cup flour and enough cold water to make a creamy mixture. Boil over slow heat for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Cool. Add cold water to thin if necessary.

Cooked Dough I
4 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 cup salt
1/2 cup boiling water
3 to 5 drops of food coloring (optional)
Mix cornstarch and salt in pot. Add color if desired. Pour in boiling water, stirring until soft and smooth. Place pot over fire and stir until it forms a soft ball (approximately 2 to 3 minutes). Cool and knead with hands several minutes. If it sticks to fingers, dust hands with cornstarch. Some recipes recommend adding a few drops of cooking oil to delay drying, or storing in airtight container for later use. Shaped figures dry in 2 days or place in oven for 1 hour on low heat (approximately 225 °F).

Cooked Dough II
1/2 cup flour
1/2 cup cornstarch (blend with 1/4 to 1/2 cup cold water)
1/2 cup salt
2 cups boiling water
3 to 5 drops of food coloring (optional)
Add salt to boiling water. Combine flour with cornstarch and water. Pour hot mixture into cold. Put in double boiler over hot water. Cook and stir until glossy. Cool overnight. Knead in additional flour until right consistency, adding food color if desired. (A similar recipe uses only 1/4 cup cornstarch and specifies 1/2 cup of the cold water.)

Uncooked Play Dough
3 cups flour
1 cup water
1/4 cup salt
1 tablespoon oil
3 to 5 drops of food coloring (optional)
Mix flour with salt; add water with coloring and oil gradually. Add more water if too stiff; add more flour if too sticky. Let the children help with the mixing and measuring. Keep dough stored in plastic bags or a covered container in cool place. (Note: Some sources suggest the finished products can be baked at 225 °F for 2 hours and then decorated, if desired.)

Salt Dough
1 cup salt
¾ cup cold water
½ cup cornstarch
Combine all ingredients in a double boiler placed over medium heat. Stir the mixture constantly for about 2 or 3 minutes until it becomes so thick that it follows the spoon. When the consistency is similar to bread dough, turn out onto wax paper or aluminum foil to cool. When cool, knead for several minutes, and it's ready to use. This dough may be kept several days if stored in airtight container.
(Note: A similar recipe calls for ½ cup of cold water and recommends a few drops of cooking oil to delay drying. Finished molded figures will need 2 days or 1 hour in the oven on very low temperature to dry).

Favorite Play Dough
1 cup flour
½ cup salt
1 tablespoon oil
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 cup water
3 to 5 drops food coloring (optional)
Mix all dry ingredients in a saucepan. Add liquids and cook approximately 3 minutes till mixture pulls away from pan and a ball forms. Empty onto the counter top and knead. Can be stored in an airtight container for many days. (Note: A similar recipe uses 2 teaspoons cream of tartar).

Variety Doughs
For a fun change, try adding sawdust, coffee grounds, cornmeal or oatmeal, which create interesting textures. Flavorings such as orange, lemon, mint or almond create different smells.

Puppets
Create puppets from small paper bags, old socks, empty toilet paper tubes, or empty plastic containers. Add fabric, buttons, bits of string, paint, and colored paper to create a special puppet.

Gluing
Create great collages by gluing magazine or greeting card pictures and assorted cast off materials on paper or cardboard. Collect string, old ribbons, cellophane, tissue paper, confetti, seeds, cotton, fur, wool, yarn, doilies, cupcake papers, eggshells, packing material, leathers, grass, twigs, leaves, shells, sawdust, wood, and fabric scraps to create attractive designs when glued in place.

Paper Mache
Tear old newspapers into one to one-and-one-half-inch strips. Stir small amount of flour into cup of cold water to make soupy mixture. Dip the strips of newsprint in flour and water paste and arrange on balloon frame (or use paper bag full of air, stapled shut, a clean empty plastic container with lid, or create a chicken wire base). Allow each layer of newspapers to dry thoroughly before adding the next layer. (Older children may like to add legs by taping on empty cardboard tube legs, or use other containers to define shape to the product.)

Crayon Fun
Crayon rubbings are made by rubbing the side of a small piece of peeled crayon over a textured cutout, leaf, or other interesting shape or surface. Try corrugated cardboard cutouts placed on a clean surface and covered with sheet of clean paper. Have the child hold both pieces firmly in place while rubbing across the top paper with the flat crayon.

Old crayons can be shaved with the blade of blunt scissors onto a sheet of waxed paper. Fold paper in half and have an adult press with warm iron, protecting the iron with an old cloth. For variety, bits of tissue paper, colored cellophane, or fall leaves can be arranged between the pieces of waxed paper before pressing.

Multi-colored crayon
Have an adult PARTIALLY melt bits of peeled scrap crayons in an old tin can in a pan of warm water on low heat. Be sure enough is melted to hold the crayon together. Pour into well-greased, small, heat-proof throw-away container and cool away from children. When firm, unmold to produce a large multi-colored "new" crayon.

Crayon resist painting
After drawing a picture with heavy crayon strokes, the child paints over the drawing with thin dark-colored paint. The dark color fills in all the areas that the crayon has not covered, producing a feeling of a night picture.

Creative story writing
Sometimes children enjoy telling an adult about their picture. Print what the child says and then read it back to the child. The child will have great fun seeing the original story in words.

Creating to music
Put on a record or tape and add music to the art experience. Children will enjoy painting to the rhythm and mood of the music.

For further information:

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DEVELOPMENT IN INFANCY

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

500G-00084

Is my child developing normally? Should my child be doing the same things that my neighbor's child is doing at this age? These kinds of questions often plague parents as they observe their young infant.

Developmental milestones are major markers or points of accomplishment in children's development. They usually follow somewhat orderly steps and occur within fairly predictable age ranges.

The average age that a certain milestone occurs is called a norm. While children grow in a sequence or pattern of development, their activity may occur sooner, at, or later than a certain norm. Thus it is important to remember that infants are learning rapidly and that age-level expectations always represent a range and never an exact point in time. Parents who are concerned about their child's development should contact their pediatrician or public health nurse for further evaluation.

The newborn:
The sensitive newborn spends most of their time sleeping and eating (6 to 8 feedings per day, 25 to 30 minutes each). Hearing is present at birth, while vision is limited and improves. Child may have several bowel movements a day and gradually learns to like a gentle bath.

The newborn enjoys being touched, held, carried, rocked, and talked to, but may fuss when over stimulated or picked up abruptly. Child enjoys gazing at other faces (especially eyes) up close and being near other family me...bers when awake – stretching, looking, and listening, preferring to listen to mother's voice over a stranger's. The newborn's cry is his way of communicating a need to the new world. Gentle swaddling and continuous soft sounds such as humming or soft music are often comforting to infants who continue to cry after being fed, changed, checked for pain, held and rocked.

The 1 to 4 month old:
The young infant takes 3 to 5 feedings per day, begins fussing before anticipated feeding time, and does not always cry when hungry. The child needs only a little assistance in getting nipple to mouth, sucks vigorously, and may choke on occasion with the vigor and enthusiasm of sucking. Additionally, an infant this age may become impatient if the bottle or breast continues to be offered once hunger is satisfied. Around 4 months, child begins to accept small amounts of solid food, such as mashed banana, if placed well back on tongue. Parents should check with their pediatrician or health nurse about when to begin introducing solid foods to the infant.

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Child enjoys the bath and may kick and laugh. The child has one or two bowel movements per day, frequently skips a day, and is establishing a regular time for bowel movements. Feeding, bathing and changing routines provide important face-to-face social interaction opportunities between infants and the parents he is learning to know and enjoy.

During this stage, the child gradually establishes the ability to hold his head erect and steady. He tries to reach for, grasp, and manipulate objects. Vision improves. Waking time is spent in physical activity, kicking, turning head from side to side, clasping hands together and grasping objects. The child is becoming talkative and enjoys being talked with, smiled at, and sung to, although may cry when social interaction ends. At this age child appears happy when awake and alone for short periods of time. Facial expressions and cries signal fatigue, hunger or discomfort.

The infant often falls asleep for the night soon after the evening feeding and may sleep for six hours or through the night. Child may average 14 1/2 to 17 hours of sleep per day. Thumb sucking may begin, and the child may entertain himself before falling asleep "cooing," playing with hands, or jiggling the crib.

The 4 to 8 month old:
Between 4 and 8 months, babies grow more adventurous as they roll over, scoot, or sometimes begin to creep or crawl.

Child is adjusting feeding times to the family's schedule, and usually takes 3 or 4 feedings per day. At this age, child shows interest in feeding activity, and may reach for the food, spoon, or cup. The child is able to wait half an hour or more for first morning feeding, has less need for sucking, and begins to enjoy solid foods if they are finely chopped. When hunger is satisfied, the child will close mouth or turn head away.

A child of this age enjoys being free of clothes, and splashes with delight in the bath. Hands move constantly, reaching and pulling on things around him, including his own socks and clothing fasteners. Child usually has one bowel movement per day and urinates often and in quantity.

When awake, the child enjoys sitting with some support, and then alone. The child likes lying on his back, arching back, kicking, stretching legs upwards, grasping feet and bringing them to mouth. During the later part of this stage the child may stand up holding onto furniture and make walking movements while adult holds hands. Child looks at own hands with interest and delight; may squeal or gaze at them intently. Soft, squeaky toys and rattles create enjoyment as child puts them in mouth, bites and chews on them. Child talks happily (babbling) with a variety of sounds, laughs with pleasure, differentiates between people and begins to initiate social fun with family members. The young baby enjoys rhythmic activities like being bounced or jiggled.

A night's sleep of 11 to 13 hours usually ends between 6 and 8 am without awakening for a late-night feeding. Child may take 2 or 3 naps a day and usually falls asleep soon after the evening meal.

The 8 to 12 month old

During the last months of the first year of life, babies begin to show they can cause things to happen and discover they are vulnerable to things happening to them. Memory improves. The child may say their first word, as "da-da", or "ma-ma", and may respond to "bye-bye".

The baby now eats three meals a day with a midmorning or midafternoon snack, has good appetite, develops certain likes and dislikes for food, begins to eat finger food, enjoys holding and drinking from a cup, and may refuse a bottle. Child may remove food from mouth, look at it, and return it to the mouth as part of his busy mealtime activity.

At this age the child may show great interest in pulling off hats, shoes, and socks, and cooperates to some degree in being undressed and dressed. The child loves to let water drip from sponge or washcloth and other kinds of bath play. Child has one or two bowel movements per day and may become fussy when diaper needs changing. At this age child may occasionally be dry after a nap.

This age child enjoys pulling up to stand, standing alone, creeping, or walking with help or alone. Child likes to put things on head, put objects in and out of each other, and throw things on the floor in expectation of their return. The child enjoys hiding behind other things, shows interest in opening and closing doors, may give an object to an adult upon request but expects to have it returned, and responds to "no" – but often in a playful fashion. Being separated from mother or father is a distressful experience at this age, but is easier when a familiar person is nearby (as brother or sister) mother's voice can be heard, or toys are available to play with. The child seeks out physical comfort from parents and enjoys many relationships with those he knows well. Additional emotions of anger, fear, affection, and surprise emerge as the infant engages in close emotional and physical closeness with family members.

While willing to go to bed, the 8 to 12 month old may not go to sleep immediately and may still awaken during the night. The night's sleep usually ends between 6 or 8 in the morning when the child is content to play quietly for 15 minutes to 30 minutes before demanding attention. The child usually takes one afternoon nap most days and will play or walk about in the crib.

That first year:

While requiring a great deal of care and love during this most important first year of life, infants bring increasing joy to new parents as they become better and better acquainted. Each child's unique personality and developmental patterns influence and are influenced by his or her most important caregivers — the new parents!

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DISCIPLINING YOUNG CHILDREN

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

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Discipline starts at infancy. The way babies and children are talked with, cared for, and treated, helps determine their feelings about themselves. Discipline can help or hinder a child's self esteem, the feelings of one's own self worth, and their subsequent ability to succeed. There are two ways to discipline children – negatively and positively.

Negative discipline:
- makes a child feel worthless
- makes a child feel victimized
- eliminates the possibility of a child to feel in control
- increases the blame a child feels towards others
- lessens the ability of children to develop inner controls to handle future problems
- increases the fear a child has of others

Negative discipline utilizes verbal put downs and/or punishment to control behavior. While any adult may occasionally criticize, discourage, blame, shame, use sarcasm, physically punish, or isolate a child, consistent use may be damaging to a child's self esteem and abilities.

Positive discipline:
- increases a child's self esteem
- allows a child to feel valued
- enables a child to become increasingly independent
- helps a child take initiative
- helps a child relate successfully
- helps a child learn to see possible consequences of actions and other aspects of problem solving skills
- helps a child avoid blaming others
- helps a child learn to balance their needs with others

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Positive discipline techniques are based on a lot of time, interaction and ATTENTION from significant adults during times when behavior is not necessarily an issue. A child tends to feel he is loved and valued when parents:

- spend a lot of leisure time with him
- share important activities and meaningful play
- use descriptive, non judgmental statements to reinforce work efforts ("Susie is tying her shoe.")
- share smiles, touches, hugs, cuddles
- model courtesy in daily interactions ("please", "thank you"...)
- converse with the child as an equal
- provide child with choices for decision making
- ignore inappropriate behavior that is not a safety issue or disrespectful, whenever possible
- remove a child from an activity where inappropriate disruptive behavior cannot be redirected. Occasional use of time out limited to the number of minutes of the child's age will help a child learn that to participate and receive attention, he or she must act appropriately.

Ten "tricks of the trade" for parents

Parenting young children can be an exhausting undertaking even for experienced adults. And, because young children are egocentric, they will interpret parental grumpiness as disapproval. Children tend to assume they are responsible for what they do not understand.

Make the most of the time you spend with young children and turn potential negative situations into some of life's most rewarding experiences. Below are some tricks that may help:

1. Be sure YOU get enough sleep, food, and time off to pursue rewarding projects beyond the children, so you can give your best when you are together.

2. Understand that it is the job of a child to explore, taste, touch, smell, pour, squeeze, tote, poke, and question. Through exploration, experimentation., and play, children learn. Play is a child's work.

3. Realize that until the child is almost two, adults are completely responsible for their safety and comfort, and are responsible for creating conditions that encourage good behavior. Parents are still largely responsible after this age, although the child may assume a greater share of responsibility. By changing the conditions, parents can often change behavior.

4. Examine your parenting style preferences, in terms of what you consider appropriate, and your tolerance levels. Try to plan your day accordingly. If dinner time is difficult, for example, prepare most of the evening meal in the morning, or on Sunday, and have it tucked in the refrigerator or freezer.

5. Examine your environment for its "supportiveness" to parenting. For example, are toys on low shelves where children can reach them and put them away, thus establishing good responsible habits and assisting in the upkeep of the home? Can children play in protected places, accomplishing their need to concentrate and work, but out of the area that needs to be presentable for guests?

6. Be sure your expectations of children are consistent, fair and age appropriate. Do your expectations show understanding of a child's developmental needs and abilities? Some families have too many limits, others too few or have rules that are not enforced. Hint: Some parents find it helpful to have one rule: "Children may not hurt themselves, others, or things." While understandable accidents may still occur, considerate guidance of children will help them understand the importance of care and kindness to others.

7. Watch for opportunities to offer young children a large number of simple choices each day. While you have the option to decide on what the choices will be (thus making sure they are both favorable options). Decision-making instills a sense of control and independence, a sense of motivation, pride, commitment, involvement and maturity. For example, "Mark, would you like to wear your blue shirt or your green one?" "Mary, would you like to pick up the blocks or the puzzle, while I do the other one?"

8. Make sure all family members get sufficient daily exercise, food and sleep. While the physical needs for nourishment and sleep are often a priority, children also need periodic daily exercise for growing muscles. Sharing active dancing, running, skating, swimming, or a brisk walk around the neighborhood can provide special time to have fun with your child, and will help the child feel like playing quietly at other times.

9. Use positive reinforcement to help children understand how pleased you are with the efforts they are putting forth. Statements which describe a child's actions, but are nonjudgmental (don't say bad or good) encourage and provide evidence that they are noticed. "Mary, that is a very RED picture," helps Mary feel her work is noticed. Because children learn from the PROCESS, the product is less important, and neither it nor the child should be judged as "good" or "bad."

10. Laughter is great medicine! Enjoy the humorous side of life. Be prepared to laugh at yourself, at a joke a child shares with you, and at life. Laughter can bring great joy and help relieve the daily stresses of life.

When a crisis erupts - and it will!

Even when parents try to prevent unnecessary stress in families, problems will still arise. For example, dinner time is often a difficult time of the day. Family members are tired and hungry, this is often a fussy time for babies, and there are tasks to be performed before the family can eat.

In the this example, Mom needs to prepare dinner, and Mary (age 3 1/2) is whining. She wants Mom to play with her. Notice what happens in this INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSE:

Mom yells in anger, "Mary, every time I have to get dinner on, you start fussing and whining. I'm sick of it. (whack, whack) Now you have something to cry about. Go to your room and stay there!"

This example illustrates negative criticizm, blame, shame, physical punishment, and isolation. Mary now feels guilt and has less confidence in herself.

Notice what happens in this HELPFUL RESPONSE:

Mom says sympathetically, but cheerfully, "Mary, I am sorry. I know you are upset because you'd like to play that game, but I cannot play with you right now because we are all tired and hungry and I must prepare dinner. As soon as we get Mark his dinner, and we eat, then I think we'll feel better and I would like to play your game with you. Would you like to help by putting the napkins around, or maybe helping me wash these potatoes? I'd appreciate your help. Or, maybe you'd like to try the game once by yourself and I'll watch you from here."

This example illustrates Mom:

- trying to focus on WHO has the problem, thus alleviating unnecessary guilt. Because Mom recognizes Mary's problem, Mom does not feel threatened.

  ("I know you are upset...").

- verbalizing her understanding of the child's needs and feelings, thus demonstrating the legitimacy of those feelings, even though she may not approve of her actions.

  ("I am sorry. I know you are upset because you'd like to play that game...").

- being appreciative of the child's efforts.

  ("I'd appreciate your help").

- being firm but friendly regarding limits.

  ("I cannot...").

- being sure limits are consistent and fair and explained to the child in simple terms.

  (It is time to prepare dinner and I cannot play during this time of day).

- trying to maintain a cheerful attitude.

  (Mom is not angry and is willing to share her attention cheerfully).

- understanding the role of hunger and fatigue in how children feel and act.

  (Mom is getting dinner on as quickly as possible).

- ignoring the inappropriate behavior that she can.

  (Mary is exhibiting symptoms of being upset by being fussy and grouchy, but these are neither dangerous to herself, others or property).

- providing choices that may fulfill the child's needs and providing opportunities to practice problem solving.

  (As Mom suspects, although Mary is tired and hungry, she is seeking companionship, Mom suggests a valid alternative that involves her. All of the choices are appropriate and fine with Mom. Mary must decide. [Help me in the kitchen or try it by yourself]).

- demonstrating protection of another's rights, a different perspective than the child may have considered.

  (Mom needs to prepare dinner for Mark and the family, including Mary. "We are all tired and hungry.")

- indicating her confidence in the child's ability.

  (Mom's comments and voice tone indicates she knows the child will understand, she knows it is hard to wait, but that she has faith in the child's ability to delay her desire until after dinner).

- modeling the kind of behavior she expects from Mary.

  (Mom is staying calm and understanding even though all family members are tired and hungry, and someone else [Mary] is upset).

In the above incident, Mary's frustrations have been dealt with BEFORE they erupted in an infraction of the rules. Mom was able to recognize potential problems with Mary on the horizon, and get her involved to prevent serious problems. If, however, Mom had not restructured the situation and Mary's behavior had hurt another person (frustration increased and she kicked Mark), it would have been important to go first to Mark and reassure him that he is OK.

Next, Mom would need to be very firm with Mary. Mom needs to have made it clear that such behavior will not be permitted, that she is going to keep Mary and Mark safe, and that in the future Mom expects Mary to use words and tell her the problem. Mom may even give Mary the words to use, "Next time, come to me and say, 'I'm mad'."

Mom should then change the focus to something positive and move on. "I'll help you pick up your blocks and then we'll get dinner together." Mom can take Mary firmly by the hand and, recognizing her need for attention, get her involved in something for which she can provide positive attention. In the future, Mom will watch carefully so she can prevent Mary's frustrations from becoming severe, and can provide assistance to help her handle her feelings.

If things don't seem to work:

Parents who feel that discipline is a problem are encouraged to seek assistance from community support groups and professionals. Talk to your pediatrician or public health nurse. Many times hearing, speech, vision, illness or other physical problems are first noticed as discipline issues. Children may seem uncooperative or unwilling when in reality the cause of the problem is much different.

For further reading:

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CHOOSING CHILD CARE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

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Parents are responsible for choosing child care that is not only safe, but provides their child with the appropriate physical, cognitive, emotional and social stimulation for the best development. Unlike community restaurants, operating CHILD-CARE FACILITIES may or may not be licensed; and if licensed, may or may not be good. Then how can you judge **quality** of child care?

The Telephone Interview As a Method For Screening

According to recent research, important indicators of a quality child care facility are group size, (including appropriate teacher to child ratios), and staff knowledge of early childhood education and child development. Save time and energy by narrowing the possible choices down to the best ones through telephone interviews. (Keep in mind that the best facility for your child and your family may require driving out of your way; be willing to make that commitment. Further, the best facility may or may not be more expensive than others, as cost is not necessarily an indication of quality.) Call the facilities you are considering to obtain screening information. Decide which programs you are most interested in by selecting those with the most favorable answers to the following questions:

1. Do you currently have openings or anticipate openings at the time needed? If the voice is friendly and the answer is "yes," go on.
2. How large is the size of the group my child would be in? If the answer is the same or less than the maximum group size of 6 to 8 infants, 10 to 12 toddlers, 15 three to five year olds, go on.
3. How many staff members are with each group of children? If there are 2 or more staff at all times for this size group, go on.
4. What is the educational level of the lead caregiver (teacher) of this group? If the lead teacher of your child's group has an associates or bachelor's degree in Child Development, consider yourself very lucky, and go on. If the lead teacher has considerable course work in child development, a 30 Credit Certificate in Child Development, or a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential, go on. (Caution: if the degree title is Early Childhood Education, be sure it includes child development and a course of study about infants and young children, rather than an elementary education focus).

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5. What is the educational background of the director of the program? If the director has a bachelors degree in Child Development, (sometimes within the colleges of Home Economics, Psychology or Education) go on. If the director has lower qualifications of an associates degree in Child Development, CDA (Child Development Associate) credential, or other post-high school education which includes course work in the development and appropriate care of young children, you may still want to check the program out further.

6. May you go and visit the program? If you are welcome to visit the program, go. If an appointment is required, find out if parents of enrolled children must make an appointment to visit. If parents of enrolled children are not encouraged to drop in and visit anytime, stop here. While confidentiality and safety procedures may require that an appointment be made to visit before enrollment, parents of enrolled children should always be welcome to visit their child's home-away-from-home.

The Unannounced Visit

Visit the child-care "screened facility" unannounced, preferably in the morning. Check in at the office and request to visit the classroom where your child would be enrolled. If the environment looks good, spend at least 30 minutes observing. (If you cannot answer "yes" to the following questions, thank the office staff, leave and go visit another "screened facility.")

1. **Reliable Information:** Based on your first impression, does the information you were given over the phone seem accurate? If you were a child, would you like to spend your day here?

2. **Space:** Is there adequate amount of clean, fresh-smelling space for children to play together all day? Indoors and out? Are bathrooms clean and sanitary? Is there a variety of safe, supervised, places for children to be (soft, quiet places to be alone, and active places to play in the group?)

3. **Play Materials:** Is there a sufficient quantity and variety of appropriate, clean, neatly and attractively-arranged books and play materials for the number of children in the group? Indoors and out?

4. **Children:** Do children appear healthy and happy, busily conversing and working with the materials, selecting specific activities at will, and taking some responsibility for putting them away? Indoors and out?

5. **Food:** Do the snacks appear to be prepared under sanitary conditions and be nutritious?

6. **Staff:** Do the caregivers and teachers appear healthy, happy, clean, organized, and professional? Do they relate to children in interested, loving, concerned ways? Do they spend time observing the work of small groups of children, moving from group to group, giving some attention to each child in the group, helping where needed, but still keeping all in view?

7. **Safety:** Is there evidence of safety and emergency planning, such as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and a first aid kit? In looking over the play areas do material, equipment and environment appear to be safe for children and no obviously dangerous problems are seen?

8. **Program:** Is there an age-appropriate variety of activities available to children? Does adequate time and space exist for

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children to concentrate, rest, expand their creativity, develop problem solving skills and participate in both quiet and active play?

If answers to all of the above are "yes," and you feel good about this program for your child, explain that you are interested in this program, but that you would like to visit other programs. Then schedule an appointment for another visit at different time of the day and tour of the rest of the facility. Also schedule a meeting to obtain further information from the Director.

The Scheduled Visit

Return to the facility for your scheduled visit. Tour the facility and observe in the classroom your child might attend for a different 30 minute period of time. If agreeable with the staff, you might like to bring your child along on this visit to see how the child responds. If the answers to your screening questions are still favorable, meet with the director to discuss the following:

1. **REGULATIONS:** Is the facility licensed?

2. **POLICIES:** Request a copy of the program policies. Request clarification, as needed, of the following:

- **Discipline procedures.** If the director indicates that discipline is normally not a problem, that there are age-appropriate limits, and that hitting, harsh words, and emotional abuse are not permitted, and you feel the techniques are appropriate for your child, go ahead.

- **Parent visitations, involvement, communication and support.** If the policies of the program seem supportive to parents, encourage parents to visit unannounced, include periodic parent conferences to discuss the child's welfare, and are to your liking, go ahead.

- **Sick children and administration of medications.** If the policies of the program ensure safety relative to medications, and ill children are not exposed to other children in care, go ahead.

- **Child's daily schedule including meal time, nap time, outdoor play, gross motor play when children cannot go outside, TV viewing, and using the bathroom.** If children are given the majority of time to choose from a changing, preselected array of materials and activities, and you feel the rest of the child's day is scheduled appropriately to meet your child's needs, go ahead.

- **Other child health and safety policies,** including transportation, procedures to stop the spread of germs, field trips, nutritious meal and snack plans, and emergency evacuation procedures. If the responses are appropriate, go ahead.

- **Fees, payment policies, vacations, cancellation notice requirements, and refund policies.** Clarify who provides diapers, lunches, bottles, blankets, and other child-care necessities.

If you are still favorably impressed with the program, ask to have your child visit for a few "trial" sessions. You, as a parent, should be permitted to attend. If you are permitted, go ahead.

Parent and Child Trial Period

Prior to attending, both parents should thoroughly read and discuss the policy information provided. Write down any questions you would like to have clarified at your trial sessions. Also, write down any questions that come to mind as you observe your child interacting with the group. Discuss these with the teacher or director after the class.

For Further Information

For a more detailed discussion of things to look for in child care, write for:

Harms,Thelma. "Finding Good Child Care," reprinted from *Parents Magazine*. Child Care Action Campaign, 99 Hudson Street, Room 1233, New York, NY, 10013. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed business-size envelope.

Child Care Action Campaign. "Care For Your Child - Making The Right Choice," "How to Select a Baby sitter," and "Choosing Care for Your Child," flyers. 99 Hudson Street, Room 1233, New York, NY 10013.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. "What to Look For in a Good Early Childhood Program." 1834 Connecticut Ave., N. W., Washington, DC 20009. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed business-size envelope.

Also read:

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HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

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Each fall, new teachers with butterflies in their stomachs, excitement, and curiosity, greet new classrooms of students. "What will my children be like?" "Will they like me?" "Will I be able to teach them better than anyone has ever done – and REALLY make a difference in their lives?" "Will I be one of those teachers they remember forever?" "Will I like this class?"

Children and parents ask similar questions. "Will the teacher be nice? Attractive? Kind?" "Will the teacher like me – and my child?" "Will things go well this year?"

With mixed emotions and expectations by teachers, parents and children, the learning partnership begins.

WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER?

1. Welcome
If possible, take your young child to school the first day and introduce yourself and your child. Make the teacher feel welcome. If you can't go in person, send a note of welcome with your child and a blueberry muffin or couple of a homemade cookies for coffee time. Your child's teacher will remember your hospitable welcome all year long.

2. Share your concerns
Let your child's teacher know early in the fall about any concerns you have. These may be about your child's educational year, getting your child to and from school, or things happening in your life that may influence your child at school. Take the child to school early one day to visit for a few minutes, or send a note and request a conference time with the teacher after school.

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Share your concerns with the teacher and discuss how they will be treated in this classroom. As personalities and teaching/learning styles differ, it is important to know as soon as possible how the teacher will treat your child.

3. Offer to help
Let the teacher and principal know you are interested in helping in your child's school. Many schools provide opportunities for parents to volunteer one morning a week, or do special things for the class in the evenings, such as cutting out pictures, or repairing equipment. These kinds of offers let the school staff know of your interest and commitment to your child's education, and they help build a cooperative teamwork approach.

4. Find out how you can best help your child
Most schools and teachers have specific policies for attendance and school work. Read all letters and notes the teacher and principal send home, and respond to the teacher's interest and concern. Thank the teacher, and attempt to follow suggested requests. If you cannot comply because of family circumstances, let the teacher know. A cheerful note helps the teacher know you care.

5. Do your part at home - stay informed
Spend a few minutes each day with your child talking about the day. Try to help with homework problems. If you don't know the material, it can be especially fun to let the child teach you. One of the true joys of learning is that we are never too old to enjoy learning a new idea. Then, let the teacher know about your joint study sessions.

6. Attend scheduled parent conferences
Caring enough to attend scheduled parent conferences lets the teacher know you are supportive. Bring a list of questions if you have any. Tell the teacher the things that you and your child especially enjoy. Most teachers are willing to help and often can refer parents to special resources if they do not have the answers themselves.

7. Stay in touch
Call the school when you have questions and concerns. Sometimes teachers can take calls in the early morning before the school day begins, or you can leave a message with the office to have the teacher return your call later in the day. When you talk with the teacher say, "I'd like to talk with you for a moment about... would you have the time now?" The better the relationship you have established, the easier this communication will be. Teachers don't want to hear from you ONLY when things are going poorly.

If your school has a parent group, join it. Become involved. Your communication with the school will be easier.

Remember, many teachers are also parents – they have children too. They, too, were once children and usually understand that being a parent is often the most difficult – but most important job in the world. When parents and teachers work together, children learn the very best!

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SHARE THE WONDERS OF LANGUAGE WITH CHILDREN

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

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Children learn how things work through the process of PLAY. Play is exploration. Play is trying out new roles. Play is messing around with materials. Play is experimenting with a PROCESS. **Play is a child's work.**

When children paint, they are exploring the PROCESS of how paints and brushes work, and, they are learning as they play. Water play provides opportunities for children to learn about gravity, even though they may not call it that. Properties of water, and other aspects of our world are seen through the processes of pouring, spilling, dipping, wiping-up, and trying again. Additionally, children learn important problem solving skills as they consider various alternatives and make choices in their play.

> How adults use language in guiding children greatly influences how and what children learn, do, and say. Guided exploration, under the safe supervision of a loving adult, helps children learn about the world we live in and provides important foundation knowledge for school and life success.

Try some Positive COMMENTS with a young child:

- "That is a very RED picture, Mark."
- "Wow, you worked a LONG time."
- "Michael, your tower is really TALL."
- "You've painted on the paper very carefully, Susan."

Children like to hear positive comments! They, in turn, will respond positively to adult statements that describe their work. Furthermore, statements like those listed above help children grow in the following ways:

1. Self-esteem

Statements that describe important aspects of a child's work and are nonjudgmental (they don't label the child or the play as either bad or good) tell children their work is noticed and valued for what it is – tall, red, big, fancy. These same kinds of statements can tell children we notice and value their EFFORTS.

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These positive descriptive statements help children feel good about themselves and their ability to work successfully.

2. Knowledge

Adults can assist children in learning about how things work by providing safe opportunities for children to explore and play, focusing attention on the child's enjoyment of the process. Value the finished product no matter what it looks like! Remember, young children enjoy and learn from the PROCESS, and the product should be enjoyed for what it is. Statements that describe important aspects of a child's work help the child value their work or play efforts and encourage them to do more.

Additionally, children grow in their understanding of language through practice. Not only do children learn from one another in their play conversations, but adults teach children the meanings of words by the statements adults make. Children gain understanding of what it means to be "red" or "blue," "exuberant" or "disappointed." They learn what a "tower" is and what it means to be "very careful." Adults are language models.

3. Concentration

The best time to make comments to a working child – as with a working adult – is when the child comes to a "stopping place," or when you and the child are engaging in activities together. This respect for the child's need to have uninterrupted time and space to think and work helps him build concentration habits. Additionally, when significant adults value a child's efforts, the child is encouraged to do MORE, work longer and try new attempts. This continued effort helps children build longer concentration abilities.

Sometimes adults can help children extend concentration by solving problems that need adult assistance, or providing suggestions that extend the possibilities of the play. For example, suggesting that the child try a specific block shape may enable the child to continue building for a long time. Questions that encourage thinking may also extend play, such as "How do people get their cars into your garage, Mark?" encourages Mark to think about a new aspect of his play and construct a door on his "garage" block building.

Enjoy a Positive CONVERSATION with a young person

- "Look at that new building, John. They are starting to put on the roof. Yes, it is pretty tall..."
- "Do we want these carrots or those green beans for dinner tonight? Carrots? You like them better..."
- "Yes, that is a VERY large mosquito. I wonder how he got so large! You think that may be why..."

Talking with children about what they see, hear, feel and smell, helps them learn about our world through increased understanding and use of language. Additionally, conversations about what WILL happen in the future, or HAS ALREADY HAPPENED in the past, help them grow in important ways. Sometimes conversations start from a child's question or comment, while other times a positive adult statement triggers a child's curiosity and learning interest.

1. Self esteem

Everyone likes to be talked to! Even a tiny baby may turn and gaze into a significant adult's eyes when the adult speaks directly to the child. Through conversations, older children continue to learn they are valued. WHAT they say and think is important to another person. "Someone cares enough about me to talk WITH me," is the special message transmitted to young children through real conversations about life.

2. Knowledge

Focusing attention on a child's **future** experience helps prepare him in advance and may make an upcoming experience more understandable and meaningful. Conversations about **current and past** experiences help a child understand important aspects of the experience. For example, sharing information about how YOUR father put on a roof may extend your child's understanding and interest in the new roof that is being put on a house in the neighborhood, your family, and the world we live in. The project will be viewed with new insight, new awareness, and broader interest than before.

What if you do not know the answer to a question posed by the child? Conversations with children often lead to the need for additional information. Sharing your interest and skill in "finding out" gives the child important information and helps him learn how to research the unknown. For example, "I don't know, Mark, but how can we find out? Who would know? Would the library have a book on this topic? Let's go look."

3. Concentration

Extending interests expands concentration through making important connections in the thinking process. As children expand their thinking ability to higher and more complex levels, they grow in their interests of a specific topic. Some children become very interested in buildings and build increasingly complex, multifaceted structures. Through this activity, they learn mathematical relationships, gravity concepts, and more about how buildings are constructed. Other children grow in their fascination with bugs, fish, or art activities.

Listening to children and observing their efforts provides adults with information about the wide range of interests of young children and important clues as to the most appropriate times to share special CONVERSATIONS. Books, magazines, television, radio, newspapers, and life experiences provide interesting things to talk about. Through daily conversations, adults and children grow in their understanding, respect, love, and interest for one another.

Some things to talk about with young children

Enjoy a friendly conversation with a young child about anything:

- Chat about the food we eat! What are we having for dinner? Where did the food come from? How did it get to our kitchen? Who helped prepare our food? What did you have for dinner when you were a child? Where did that food come from?

- Talk about the family. What are we going to do today? tomorrow? next week? What are other family members doing? Where does Daddy work? How does he do his job? Where do other family members work? What do they do at their job(s)?

- Enjoy a pleasant, natural stream of language while you are involved in the daily tasks of diapering, dressing, bathing, feeding, combing hair, and providing care in other ways for the young child. Talk about the tools you are using and each step of the process.

- Respond to your child's questions and curiosity. Model playful attitudes and actions with your use of language. Enjoy the sounds of words, and your child's playful use of language.

Have fun enjoying the wonders of language together!

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SELECTING TOYS FOR CHILDREN

by Jo Kuykendall, Ed. D.

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Birth to 9 years

Play is a child's work. Toys are the tools of the trade. Appropriate toys need not be costly or complicated to provide many hours of leisure fun and learning.

How to select toys:
Keep in mind the following important guidelines in selecting toys:

1. Is this toy developmentally appropriate? Toys need to be suitable to a child's age, interests, and abilities.
2. Can this toy be used in many different ways and by different ages of children? If so, the toy may have lasting worth.
3. Will the toy withstand active play of young children? Or, is it a toy that may break after a couple of uses? Saving money to invest in a more durable toy may be worth the trouble.
4. Will this toy stimulate a child's imagination? Often toys that are simple in design allow for many creative useful options.
5. Is this toy safe? Inspect toy packaging for play use and safety messages. Watch for sharp corners and small pieces that could be swallowed.
6. Does this toy permit assembling, disassembling, stacking, or connecting? From these processes, children learn how our world is put together and have opportunities to try their hand at creating.
7. Does the toy encourage cooperative interaction? War toys (play guns, knives, swords) and various play characters (often based on TV cartoons) may inhibit cooperative play. For many children these kinds of toys facilitate inappropriate power struggles and violence, and should be avoided.

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Some appropriate toys for children:
From birth to 18 months, children become acquainted with toys. They enjoy rattles, pounding and stacking toys, squeak toys, floating tub toys, picture blocks, strings of big beads, push-pull toys, small take-apart toys, nested boxes or cups, stacking toys and rings, books with rhymes, and musical toys.

From 18 months to 3 years, children enjoy directing, organizing, problem solving, pretending and constructing. A child this age enjoys a tricycle or other ride-on toys, a wagon to get into, sandbox toys, balls, blocks of different sizes and shapes, a wading pool, child-size play furniture, simple dress-up clothes, stuffed animals, dolls, simple puzzles, games, take-apart toys with large parts, clay and modeling dough, large crayons, blackboard and chalk, simple musical instruments, finger paints, non-electric trains and cars, and tea sets.

From 3 to 6 years, children like to create play worlds and modern environments. They enjoy developing movement and communication skills. A child this age particularly enjoys dress-up and pretend. Suitable toys include dolls, store-keeping toys, toy phones, toy clocks, playhouses, housekeeping toys, farm sets, small trucks and cars, small planes and boats, simple construction sets, domestic toys, trains, large tricycles, sleds, wagons, backyard gym sets, record player and records, tape recorder and tapes, paper, story books, paints and brushes, felt markers, sketch pads, blocks and building toys.

From 6 to 9 years, children enjoy learning social strategies, trying out things, and fantasy worlds. They enjoy moving confidently through space and exploring the work worlds. These children particularly enjoy board games, tabletop sports games, marbles, tops, kites, fashion and career dolls, toy typewriters, racing cars, electric trains, construction sets, science and craft kits, handicrafts, sports and hobbies. They like larger bicycles, ice and roller skates, pogo sticks and scooters. They enjoy books, costumes, doll houses, play villages, miniature people and vehicles, and magic sets.

Parent involvement – the vital link to engaging play
Parents can observe a young child playing to learn more about this unique young person and his special interests. Spending a few minutes each day just watching a young child, teaches adults a lot about children. For example, after making a suggestion for play that arouses a child's response, the parent can sit down and just observe for awhile. The added reward to this special quality time is the message the child absorbs, "my work is important to my family!"

Parents can talk with children during play, share ideas and thoughts, develop new ideas, and explore processes and problem solving efforts together. Through these efforts, children develop expanded vocabulary, and understanding of their world. For example, a parent might ask, "I wonder what would happen if..." to lead the child into further exploration of their play.

Parents can help children learn new ways to play with toys. Through various forms of imaginative play, toys can be used for more than their obvious function. For example,

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parents can suggest that blocks be used to build a garage – and truck play becomes instantly more complex. They can hold the paper or assist with the tricky puzzle pieces. By playing together, parents and children learn more about the diverse opportunities simple toys provide.

Parents can enjoy playing with children, helping them understand appropriate ways to have fun and relax together. From birth onward, children enjoy making eye contact and playing with a parent. Enter the play and play at the child's level. Take turns making suggestions. Reading a book to a child or singing songs together provide additional treasured memories, new language, new fun, and new ideas.

Remember – not all play materials must be purchased

Some of our best play materials come from the drawers and cupboards in our homes. Children enjoy kitchen equipment – pots and pans, spoons, and measuring cups – that are safe and developmentally appropriate. Discarded special family clothing can create a dress-up box of endearing value to children of many ages. Fancy shoes, brother's worn out sports jacket, safe jewelry, mom's old dress, a silky scarf, all contribute to imaginative grown-up play by children of many ages.

Older children enjoy sorting buttons and sewing simple fabric scraps together to create dolls or attractive designs. Children enjoy taking apart old manual typewriters and wind-up clocks, and planting seeds from fruit. They enjoy cooking, picking berries, and helping in numerous family activities. Watch what your child enjoys, make sure the materials are safe and the play is well supervised, and have fun!

For further reading

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